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ABSTRACT

This publication provides Maine school administrative unit personnel with guidelines to implement procedures for identifying gifted and talented children. Legislative requirements are presented on the left-hand pages and suggested guidelines for implementing the requirements are on the right-hand pages. Requirements and guidelines are organized into five chapters which address: (1) screening; (2) objective measurements; (3) subjective measures; (4) the arts; and (5) the selection process. Specific topics covered include: definitions; identification criteria; screening for general, specific, and artistic abilities; intelligence tests (group and individual); aptitude tests; achievement tests; alternative methods for grades K-2; student characteristics; teacher checklists; parent referral; peer referrals; self-referral; pupil products and performances; student artistic products; the selection team; placement; collaboration with the regular teacher; parent notification; the annual student program review; and review of identification. Includes 113 references. (DB)

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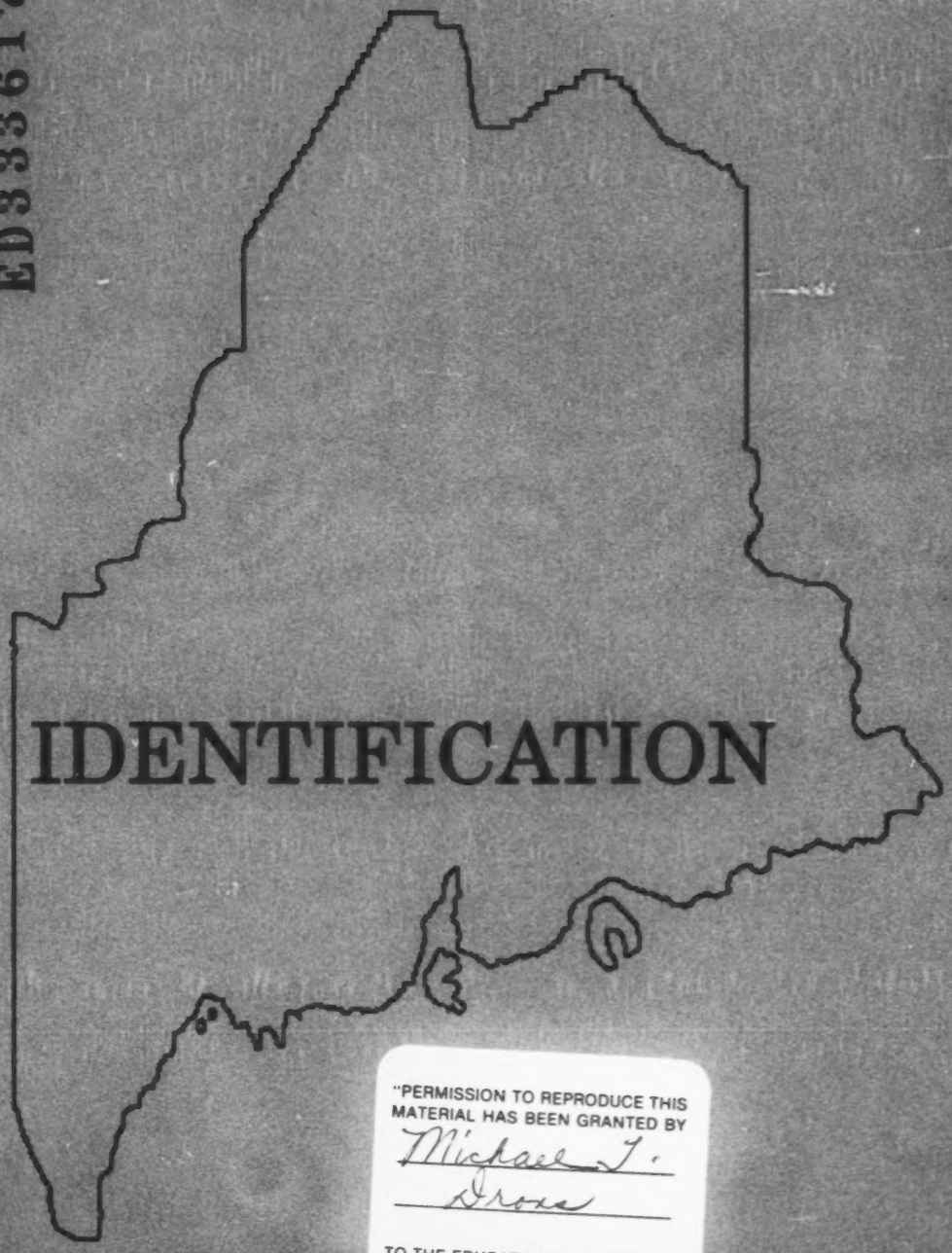

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Educational Programs

for Gifted and Talented Children

GUIDELINES

for

IDENTIFICATION

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for

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FORWARD

The purpose of this publication is to provide Maine school administrative unit personnel with practical guidelines and advice that may assist them in implementing the procedures for the identification of gifted and talented children. These suggestions are based on some of the best research conclusions currently available about selecting gifted students for special programming. A bibliography is provided for those who wish to examine the literature further.

The components and characteristics of an identification process which are required by Chapter 104, Educational Programs for Gifted and Talented Children, are provided on the left hand pages throughout this publication. The guidelines on the right are suggestions for implementing these requirements in the various school settings found in our state. Each school or administrative unit must devise its own approach for finding those students whose exceptional abilities require specialized instruction. If these guidelines make that task easier, they will have served their function.

104.02 Definitions

Gifted and Talented Children: "Gifted and talented children" shall mean those children in grades K-12 who excel, or have the potential to excel, beyond their age peers, in the regular school program, to the extent that they need and can benefit from programs for the gifted and talented. Gifted and talented children shall receive specialized instruction through these programs if they have exceptional ability, aptitude, skill, or creativity in one or more of the following categories:

1. **General Intellectual Ability** as shown by demonstrated significant achievement or potential for significant accomplishment above their age peers in all academic areas
2. **Specific Academic Aptitude** as shown by demonstrated significant achievement or potential for significant accomplishment above their age peers in one or more academic area(s)
3. **Artistic Ability** as shown by demonstrated significant achievement or potential for significant accomplishment above their age peers in the literary, performing, and/or visual arts.

NOTE: Children with exceptional General Intellectual Ability and/or exceptional Specific Academic Aptitude usually comprise five percent of the school population. Students with exceptional Artistic Ability usually comprise five percent of the school population. Children in the top two percent of the school population may be considered highly gifted.

Gifted and Talented Educational Program: A "gifted and talented educational program" shall mean a comprehensive, K-12 program that provides specialized instruction beyond that available within the regular school program.

INTRODUCTION

Gifted and talented children, as Chapter 104 states, are those children whose exceptional abilities require "specialized instruction beyond that available within the regular school program."

Such specialized instruction may occur in various ways. Pull-out programming, where students leave the classroom for learning activities, is one way in which to provide this specialized instruction. In addition, it is possible to provide the special, differentiated instruction within the regular classroom setting. The strength and flexibility of a school's regular program needs to be taken into account when selection and placement of students are considered. However, it should be remembered that the kind of programming options a school chooses to offer gifted and talented students must be appropriate to student needs.

Chapter 104 uses the terms "gifted" and "talented" synonymously, rather than to distinguish between ability in academics versus the arts. Further, this terminology has been accepted by educators, scholars, and researchers, although other designations, such as "highly able" or "able learners," have also been suggested.

Maine schools are required to provide special programming for gifted students in three areas of exceptionality:

- General Intellectual Ability,
- Specific Academic Aptitude, and
- Artistic Ability in the literary, performing, and/or visual arts.

There are other areas of exceptionality such as: Creative and Productive Thinking, and Leadership Ability. Maine schools may choose to identify and serve students in additional categories, but they are not required to do so.

Schools may identify up to five percent of the school population for exceptional intellectual or academic abilities to be eligible for special services and another five percent for exceptional artistic ability. These are upper limits, and depending on the strength of regular programs, schools may choose to identify fewer than 10 percent of their students for these two areas.

The diversity among identified students can be greater than the differences between these students as a group and nonidentified students. That the top two percent of a school population may be considered "highly gifted" recognizes that such students may need even further modifications to their total educational programs.

104.06 Identification: Establishment of Process

The superintendent, under policies adopted by the school board, shall establish a process for the identification of children for the gifted and talented program for each school in the school administrative unit. Each school unit shall conduct an initial screening and, thereafter, an annual review of the K-12 school population to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to be considered for selection and placement in the gifted and talented program. Instruments and procedures used in the identification process shall be as non-discriminatory as possible with respect to race, cultural and economic background, religion, national origin, sex, or handicapping condition.

THE PURPOSE OF IDENTIFICATION

The intent of establishing a process for identification is to ensure that there is in place an informed, consistent, and equitable way of determining which students in a school population both need and can benefit from programs for the gifted and talented. Student assessment is a part of the total school effort to meet the educational needs of all students; an identification process is a diagnostic procedure designed to find gifted and talented students, to determine their special educational needs, and to develop programming options to meet their individual needs.

Identification is not intended to single out students for rewards or honors. Gifted and talented programs should provide appropriate educational modifications to exceptional students' regular curricula. Further, the decision that a student no longer needs such modifications, because needs may be met without special services, should not be seen as a loss or a failure. Identification is diagnostic. Special provisions should be designed and offered based on the assessment of specific, individual exceptionalities.

IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA

The following statements suggest some bases for valid identification procedures:

- Identification may be based on a local unit's norms. Its definition of giftedness should be compatible with the State definition.
- The identification process has at least four stages:
  - broad-based screening of all students,
  - in-depth assessment of some students (possibly with additional information),
  - selection of a few students based on ability and need, and
  - placement of selected students in appropriate programming options.
- Identification for different categories of giftedness (general intellectual, specific academic, or artistic ability) requires instruments and procedures appropriate to each category.
- Identification employs multiple procedures
  - that address the variety of student abilities,
  - that recognize different sub-populations (e.g., learning-disabled gifted, bilingual, and underachievers), and
  - that accommodate the range of developmental levels reflected within the total student population.
- The identification process is clearly outlined and easily explained to all concerned.
- The identification process is ongoing throughout grades K to 12, so that students may be considered on a regular basis and that students new to the school are not overlooked.
- Identification is
  - the responsibility of an established, informed team,
  - subject to evaluation procedures, and
  - refined and revised as necessary.

THE LIMITATIONS OF IDENTIFICATION

Identification of gifted and talented students is a complex process. Even when conducted with care, identification will correctly find exceptional students, miss others, and perhaps misidentify still others.

Identification should recognize the fact that schoolchildren are always in the process of growing and developing. Therefore, as educators, we often are trying to assess potential exceptional abilities rather than realized, fully developed abilities. To delay identification until fully demonstrated abilities are evident risks the loss of many of these children's special gifts. So we must do our professional best early rather than late.

Educators must strive to find each student's special needs and abilities and to meet them in an appropriate and timely fashion. The desire for perfect accuracy in assessment should not deter schools from acting to meet students' needs.

104.07 Screening

Screening procedures shall be appropriate to the developmental characteristics of elementary and secondary children and to the abilities or aptitudes being identified. Each school unit shall establish a procedure that uses a minimum of three assessment methods for each of the three categories in which gifted and talented children are identified. Information from any **one** of the selected screening methods may qualify a child for further consideration.

A. **For General Intellectual Ability:** The screening procedure shall include objective and subjective assessment methods selected from the following:

1. Objective
   a. Individual intelligence, achievement, or aptitude tests
   b. Group intelligence, achievement, or aptitude tests
   c. For grades K-2, other appropriate methods that have received prior approval from the Commissioner
2. Subjective
   a. Teacher referral based on an appropriate screening checklist
   b. Referral by parents, peers, or members of the community
   c. Self-referral
   d. Pupil products, performance, or record of past performance
   e. Other appropriate methods that have received prior approval from the Commissioner

B. For **Specific Academic Aptitude:** The screening procedure shall include objective and subjective assessment methods selected from the following:

1. Objective
   a. Individual achievement, or aptitude tests
   b. Group achievement, or aptitude tests
   c. For grades K-2, other appropriate methods that have received prior approval from the Commissioner
2. Subjective (for Specific Academic Aptitude)
   a. Teacher referral based on an appropriate screening checklist
   b. Referral by parents, peers, or members of the community
   c. Self-referral
   d. Pupil products, performance, or records of past performance
   e. Other appropriate methods that have received prior approval from the Commissioner

C. **For Artistic Ability:** The screening procedure shall include three measures chosen from the following:

1. Pupil products, such as auditions, portfolios, works-in-progress, performance
2. Pupil interview
3. Teacher referral
4. Referrals by professional artist(s) based on analysis of pupil work
5. Self-referral
6. Referral by parents, peers, members of the community
7. Other appropriate measures that have received prior approval from the Commissioner

CHAPTER ONE: SCREENING

The first step in an identification process is screening. The goal of this step is twofold:

- o to ensure that all students are assessed equitably for possible exceptional abilities, and
- o to locate students who either clearly need the program or students who need further assessment (sometimes referred to as a pool of potential candidates).

When a program for the gifted and talented is initiated, the total school population should be screened. If a program is being phased in gradually, e.g., an arts component in grades 3 to 5, only these grade levels need to be screened by using appropriate instruments for exceptional artistic abilities. After the initial screening, procedures must be established to assure continuation of the screening process for incoming grade levels, for transfer students, and for students who were not selected previously but who may now demonstrate a possible need for specialized instruction. For those students previously selected, an annual review of each child's program is required to evaluate the appropriateness of placement and instruction. This does not mean, however, that such students must go through the full screening process every year to continue to receive special services within the gifted and talented program.

To the extent possible, screening instruments can be a blend of readily available sources of existing data (for example, objective test data) and inexpensive, group-oriented, and easily administered surveys (e.g., teacher checklists). Chapter 104 provides that information from any one of the screening methods may qualify a student for further consideration. One piece of information should not carry more weight than another. For example, if a student has an exceptional test score but does not have high grades or teacher referrals, he or she might still be considered for further assessment procedures. Or a student could be highly recommended by a teacher, but, for a variety of reasons, not have performed exceptionally well on traditional school-performance-based group tests.

The screening procedure should result in the placement of all students into three categories for the identification team's consideration:

- those who do not show evidence of requiring services from the program,
- those who definitely do require such services, and
- those for whom additional information is needed before a selection decision can be reached.

The last two categories comprise the pool of potential candidates for selection. While it may not be absolutely necessary to gather additional information on those who already show definite need of special instruction, some schools have included these students in the additional information-gathering process, not only for comparison purposes but also to substantiate previous indicators and to use this additional information for placement decisions. However, if this information gathering were to include a relatively costly and lengthy individual test, for example, those few students for whom there is no question about selection may not need to be tested.

Alternative screening methods may need to be used for students who are economically disadvantaged, culturally diverse, highly gifted, bilingual, learning disabled, under-achieving, or physically handicapped. Some discussion of these factors will be found in various sections of these guidelines, but it is important that schools acquaint themselves with specific information on these various groups.

104.07 (Excerpt)

(Assessment methods for screening for General Intellectual Ability:)

1. Objective
   a. Individual intelligence, achievement, or aptitude tests
   b. Group intelligence, achievement, or aptitude tests
   c. For grades K-2, other appropriate methods that have received prior approval from the Commissioner

(Assessment methods for screening students for Specific Academic Aptitude:)

1. Objective
   a. Individual achievement, or aptitude tests
   b. Group achievement, or aptitude tests
   c. For grades K-2, other appropriate methods that have received prior approval from the Commissioner

CHAPTER TWO: OBJECTIVE MEASUREMENTS

At least one objective measure is required for the screening of students for both general intellectual ability and specific academic aptitude. While a few objective methods exist for various artistic areas of exceptionality, none is required by Chapter 104. Objective measures, especially when they validate information from subjective sources, can provide a more accurate, fuller sense of student capabilities. In some instances, it is the objective measure that alerts schools to a student's true ability.

INTELLIGENCE TESTS IN GENERAL

Over the past few decades, standardized ability tests have received a good deal of attention. Misuse of these tests is often due to a lack of understanding of their advantages and disadvantages. If used appropriately, they can provide excellent information for the identification process. Their value is limited, however, if they are misused.

No test can measure pure innate ability. Ability tests, therefore, produce an assessment of an individual's capacity for learning by measuring what has already been learned. The results of such testing are always relative, not absolute; they indicate whether a student has done better or worse than other students who attempted the same tasks. They differ from achievement tests in that they tend to deal with skills learned over a long period of time, in or out of formal schooling, and are not limited to measuring the learning that has taken place in a specific subject area over a shorter period of time.

For selecting students with exceptional intellectual and academic ability, some consider IQ tests to be one of the best single indicators of academic aptitude. Such tests, of course, cannot possibly measure all of the varied components of human intelligence.

What intelligence tests (the term "IQ tests" is probably more accurate) actually measure is the ability to do academic work within our existing educational systems. They are general academic aptitude measures. And because these tests can be good predictors of academic success, their value in helping to identify students with high academic ability or potential is clear. The point to underscore for the purposes of identification of exceptional students is that IQ tests do not often produce exceptional scores for students who do not have exceptional academic aptitudes. The tests can and do produce, however, scores for some students much lower than their true abilities; therefore the test results should only be used to include students for possible selection, rather than to exclude students from further consideration.

Although IQ tests have been shown to be unreliable regarding many disadvantaged groups in our society, individual IQ tests have been found to be excellent identifiers of certain high-risk groups of gifted students such as highly intellectual and underachieving gifted who are not generally found through other means.

There are many complex issues surrounding the use and misuse of IQ tests, and the bibliography contains several articles on these topics.

GROUP IQ TESTS

Some schools regularly assess various grade levels with standardized IQ group tests as part of their regular testing programs. Even if a school does not do so, these tests can be administered to a class or group, generally by teachers or other professionals without any specialized training, in a relatively short period of time. Thus they are cost-effective as compared to individual tests. Group tests are useful as one criterion for finding students for further assessment during the initial screening of the school population.

INDIVIDUAL IQ TESTS

Except for special educational diagnostic purposes, schools infrequently assess students by means of individual IQ tests. These tests must be administered by a specially trained, often licensed examiner. The actual testing period for each student may take an hour or more, and a written analysis requires even more time.

Such tests have much greater reliability and validity for measuring exceptional abilities. Thus, they can be excellent instruments for the in-depth-assessment stage of identification, especially for students for whom more information is needed before a selection decision can be reached.

There can be significant differences, sometimes 30 points or more for the highly gifted, between a student's IQ score on a group test and that from an individual test. This discrepancy is due to the relatively few test items that discriminate the extreme levels of exceptionality on group tests. A student's need for specialized instruction becomes clearer when his or her IQ is found to be in the 150 range rather than the 120s. For this reason, it may not be advisable to have an arbitrarily high cut, off score on group IQ tests below which students are not further considered. Standard deviation factors must be considered when looking at any standardized test score; if such a factor is 5, an IQ score of 130 could actually range anywhere between 125 and 135.

Individual tests have other advantages besides yielding more accurate results. An examiner can provide the identification team with valuable information about students' interpersonal skills, approach to problem-solving, humor, language usage, anxiety levels, and a host of other significant characteristics. Also the results of the various subtests can give educators a composite sense of both strengths and weaknesses that can be invaluable in the assessment of the best instructional approaches for programming options for selected students.

One practice that may help schools obtain more reliable scores, but not other advantages, from individual IQ tests is the use of various short forms of these tests. Also, various combinations of subtests can yield useful information. Using such an approach, schools can obtain a valuable indicator without the lengthy procedure of giving the full battery. Test times can be significantly reduced with some combinations.

APTITUDE TESTS

Scholastic aptitude tests are perhaps the least-understood standardized tests available to educators. These tests are intended to measure potential or to predict learning performance. In content and purpose, they generally are closer to IQ tests than to achievement tests, and as such they are better suited for screening for general intellectual ability. Because of their basic similarities, intelligence tests and scholastic aptitude tests sometimes are referred to by the common term "tests of learning ability."

Some aptitude tests produce IQ scores as well as raw scores, percentiles, and stanines similar to achievement results. Other aptitude tests combine general measures (such as verbal and abstract reasoning) with skill areas (such as spelling and language usage) and do not produce intelligence quotients.

ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

All Maine public schools use some form of standardized achievement testing in their student assessment programs. Unlike IQ tests that measure general mental abilities often related to school success (such as problem solving or critical thinking), achievement tests are intended to measure student learning in the content areas of actual curricula. These tests tend to emphasize thinking processes related to knowledge and recall of factual information as well as competence in some basic skill areas. Because of this emphasis, they are more useful for screening for specific academic abilities.

One consideration with using achievement tests for screening for exceptionality is that these tests are designed for the vast majority of students within specific age and grade levels. The content that could measure the exceptional abilities of the gifted is limited to a very few test items; this is the so-called ceiling problem. Large differences in abilities, from above average to exceptionally gifted, can be found in students scoring in the top one to two percent of achievement tests. It is important to remember that percentile ranks on achievement test results do not reflect the percentage of correct responses but rather the percentage of students in the norm group (usually national) who received the same score.

When using achievement test results, it should be recognized that certain exceptionally able students do not score in the top few percentiles. Often, gifted underachievers are not motivated by taking such "uninteresting" tests; others look for more challenging exceptions to the "obvious answers," based on their own logic or insight. Since the number of these advanced, challenging questions on any given test is limited, several incorrect responses can drop a student's score from the top few percentiles.

Grade equivalent scores can also be easily misinterpreted; these are based on achieved norms for students at a given grade level. If the average raw score (the number of correct items) for a given grade level in some curricular area happened to be 68, then that mean score becomes 5.0 as the grade equivalent (GE). For a fifth grade student to have a GE of 9.3 does not necessarily mean that this student could handle the curriculum for a ninth grader in the third month in that area. Such grade equivalents are merely another statistical way to show how a given score related to the average. Statistically 50 percent of any group should be above grade level, and 50 percent should be below. In Maine generally, a greater proportion of students consistently score above national means on most achievement exams.

Since the purpose of gifted and talented screening is to find students in a given school who need specialized instruction, local norms on achievement test results may be used, rather than national norms. The Maine Educational Assessment exams (MEA) are achievement exams for which state and local norms are derived annually. These tests have a high correlation with nationally used achievement tests.

Perhaps the easiest scores to look at for screening purposes are stanines, which simply represent the total number of scores on a given test divided into nine ranges. The eighth and ninth stanines will represent roughly the top 11 percent of scaled scores. Given the limitations with achievement test results, it is probable that students achieving in the eighth and ninth stanines (or the 90th percentile and above) should warrant further assessment for possible inclusion in a program.

Finally there is the question: Which achievement test scores should be considered? Composite scores represent all subtest results that have been factored into this total score. It appears that certain subtests relate more closely to the particular characteristics of exceptional students, and therefore specific scores on such subtests as vocabulary, reading comprehension, and mathematical concepts might be more appropriate than composite scores. Such an approach factors out such areas as spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc., which are not useful as predictors of potential academic giftedness.

ACHIEVEMENT TESTS AND SPECIFIC ACADEMIC APTITUDES

At first glance, it might appear that achievement tests, or at least some subtests, should be much better suited for screening for specific academic aptitudes, such as language arts or science. In some respects this is so, but it is important to remember that this category of giftedness uses the word "aptitude," which signifies potential as much as achievement. The same "ceiling problem" mentioned above applies equally here with very few test items designed to challenge exceptional abilities in the specific academic areas.

High achievement test scores once again, therefore, should be used to include potential students for further assessment. This assessment should use, if possible, the next highest level of the achievement test (or subtests) to help specify special instructional needs. Analysis of specific test-item responses also can assist in this effort.

Except for certain exceptionalities, such as precocious reading or mathematical abilities, students are not often selected on the basis of specific academic aptitudes in the early elementary grade levels. Students seem to need time to be exposed to and explore the content of specific academic disciplines, especially science and social studies, before they can demonstrate exceptional aptitudes in them. Considering natural developmental patterns, more students are typically selected on the basis of their general intellectual ability in the younger grades, while specific academic areas tend to emerge in later years.

ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR GRADES K-2

The primary grades (K-2) raise special concerns when schools are deciding on objective measures to use in screening students for giftedness. Often, objective information in the form of test results is not readily available for review. Many schools do not administer traditional standardized tests until grade two or even three. Further, primary students come to school with a variety of skill levels and preschool experiences that can influence the way in which their knowledge and ability levels are shown. As a result of these factors, Chapter 104 recognizes a need to consider alternatives to traditional objective measures for primary- grade students.

One valuable alternative is curriculum-based assessment. By exposing all students in a primary class to more challenging enrichment units, classroom teachers or program specialists can observe and record objective data such as:

- Which children particularly enjoy and respond to the more challenging activities?
- Which children complete the more challenging activities with greater degrees of accuracy, complexity, or creativity than their classmates?
- Which children continue to show interest in or seek more information on the unit after its completion?
- Which children extend the unit with ideas of their own, or even devise original activities related to the topic?
- Which children retain the information or ideas introduced in the unit longer, volunteering these during discussions as the year progresses?

The specific documentation in a formal, ongoing procedure that certain students consistently do show such behaviors when others do not is objective information indicating such gifted characteristics as a stronger need to know and more intense interest. By exposing all the children in the classroom to the activities, it is possible to enrich everyone's experience while also providing opportunities for giftedness to be demonstrated, recorded, and quantified.

Another objective screening method that may be considered for primary students is an analysis of each student's achievement level for instructional placement in academic areas such as reading, vocabulary, and mathematics. By utilizing the school's curriculum scope and sequence outlines, together with textbook materials, an informal objective instrument can be devised for a given curriculum to show which children have demonstrated advanced skills in these areas in comparison to their age peers. The documentation could include such information as:

- Who can read and understand materials that are two grade levels above their age peers?
- Which first graders can read, explain, and appropriately use words in context from an advanced vocabulary list?
- Which second graders can name five-digit numbers and explain the place value system?

Such information can indicate the children for whom the regular curriculum must be extended, even in the basic skills. While some primary-grade students may not need much acceleration in such curricular areas (and thus not need to be served through formal gifted programming), a few may need major modifications to their educational programs and thus need to be included in gifted programming.

It should be recognized that curriculum-based assessment methods take time to administer. The results can only be observed over extended periods of instruction. For the majority of students who eventually will be selected for special programming, this developmental wait will be appropriate and yield valuable information. A few highly gifted students, however, may require immediate modifications to their curriculum due to their obvious exceptionalities; some may already be developing some negative behaviors that should not be allowed to become habitual and internalized. For these few students, some sort of individual objective assessment could be implemented so that selection for specialized instruction can take place earlier. On the other hand, if a school is confident of a child's exceptional need after some minimal period of observation and assessment, further testing may not be necessary.

104.07 (Excerpt)

(Assessment methods for screening students for both General Intellectual Ability and Specific Academic Aptitude:)

2. Subjective

   a. Teacher referral based on an appropriate screening checklist

   b. Referral by parents, peers, or members of the community

   c. Self-referral

   d. Pupil products, performance, or record of past performance

   e. Other appropriate methods that have received prior approval from the Commissioner

CHAPTER THREE: SUBJECTIVE MEASURES

Subjective measures include information on students from various sources such as teachers, parents, peers, community members, and the students themselves. These are called "subjective" in the sense that the instruments used to gather such information do not claim to have statistical objectivity (e.g., validity and reliability), which standardized measures have.

These subjective measures should not be considered invalid or unreliable, however, in the common sense of these words. In fact, such measures can provide substantial insight into student abilities in areas that traditional standardized tests cannot reveal. Using a variety of subjective measures may yield a more complete view of each student and provide additional information on which to base sound educational decisions regarding the needs of the student.

When assessing students from special populations, subjective measures may provide the most valid information on gifted students in such populations, as the handicapped, the economically disadvantaged, the culturally diverse (minorities, including the bilingual), and others. Exceptional students from these populations often are not found through traditional measures of school achievement such as standardized tests, grades, and recommendations of teachers not trained in gifted education.

CHARACTERISTICS

Students demonstrate giftedness through their behaviors. Many instruments used in an identification process, therefore, are aimed at documenting behaviors characteristic of the gifted. This is especially true of the subjective assessment methods that ask teachers, parents, or peers to note exceptional characteristics and behaviors on checklists or inventories.

Giftedness is not an absolute quality that can be measured by itself against a constant given, as can be done, for example, with height. Rather it is a relative phenomenon that is measured always in comparison to a student's age peers. For children, we can say that giftedness is shown by precocious behaviors. Some children do things earlier, faster, better than their age peers. It is not unusual for a student to be able to read and discuss a serious novel, but when this occurs at age seven or eight, it is unusually early behavior relative to age peers.

Within school contexts, it is very important to note that gifted characteristics can be manifested by negative as well as positive behaviors. One common characteristic of many intellectually gifted students is that they learn more quickly than their age peers. This can be shown by a willingness to learn more, and it can be shown equally by bored, disruptive, even rebellious behaviors when not challenged or when required to repeat exercises already mastered.

The literature on the gifted and talented is replete with extensive lists of characteristics of giftedness. These should be consulted when schools are adapting or designing checklists of student behaviors for their own survey instruments.

When constructing such instruments, schools should ensure that:

- The characteristics selected match the school unit's definition of giftedness.
- Characteristics are not combined from various categories of giftedness (e.g., intellectual with artistic) on single checklists; for example, the characteristic of

reading at a very advanced level is not necessarily one that applies to students with exceptional artistic abilities.

- There is understanding and agreement with certain premises found in various published lists of characteristics.

Since no individual student can be expected to demonstrate all characteristics equally all the time, it may not be realistic to follow the practice of assigning numerical weights to each characteristic and then requiring that a student achieve a high total of these weights in order to be further considered. Experience shows that a given student will receive, on the same checklist, varying scores from year to year and from evaluator to evaluator. What should be sought, therefore, is a relatively high range of exceptional characteristics in comparison with peers, and not an absolute cutoff score.

Finally, consideration should be given to the fact that some characteristic behaviors can be influenced by classroom and specific content-area environments. The gifted characteristic of an independent, questioning attitude might not be as apparent in an arithmetic classroom, where the emphasis is placed on precise, individual production, as it might be in a social studies classroom with a great deal of open discussion.

TEACHER CHECKLISTS

Teacher checklists of characteristic behaviors can provide valuable information that contributes to comprehensive student profiles. This information is not only useful for the identification process, but it also can be most useful when planning appropriate classroom accommodations for individual or small groups of exceptional students.

The most common form of teacher checklists employs numerical scales to indicate degrees or frequencies of various behaviors, e.g., seldom, occasionally, often, almost always; these are sometimes called rating scales.

It is important that staff development training be provided to teachers before asking them to use checklists for screening students for possible giftedness, as it increases the effectiveness of such instruments. This training should stress a thorough understanding of all key terms used on the form and appropriate methods of student observation. Unconventional or "negative" behaviors that may also indicate giftedness should be highlighted in the training as well as reflected in the instrument. Teacher checklists additionally serve as a way of acquainting teachers with the nature and needs of these exceptional students so that accommodations can be made in their regular classrooms.

Teacher checklists are useful screening instruments when these guidelines are followed:

- Teachers are well informed about the various characteristics of giftedness and the range and variety of behaviors through which it can be manifested.
- The characteristic behaviors described on the checklists are appropriate to the unit's definition of giftedness and to the specific area of giftedness being considered (general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, or the various artistic domains).
- The checklist format is concise and easy to complete in as little time as possible.
- The checklist includes only those traits that are easily observed in classroom settings directly and not based on inference. For example, if one of the traits from a local definition of giftedness were task commitment, it is easier to rate the extent to which a student "works on self-selected tasks until completion" than it is to rate "motivation."
- Teachers understand that the screening process is not intended to find and reward students who are cooperative, polite, and socially industrious.

PARENT REFERRAL

Parents have important information to share regarding their child's abilities, aptitudes, and interests, particularly since they often see their child in self, initiated activities, in non-academic settings, and in situations that involve adults and acquaintances of various ages. They also have seen their child grow and develop through various stages.

Information from parents is valuable at all levels, but it can be particularly helpful for screening in the primary grades (K-2+) because of the relatively brief school experience of students in these grades. The research suggests that parent nominations provide very accurate information for the screening process.

In general, parents have been found to be realistic about their children's capabilities, and their observations and assessments can contribute significantly to the identification process. The more a school can convey the idea that gifted and talented is not a reward program, but an appropriate education placement based on need, the more parents will understand the purpose of gifted programs and provide accurate, relevant information. Even if a school decides not to use a formal screening questionnaire or checklist for parents, there should be a procedure through which parents may request that their child be considered, or reconsidered, for possible placement.

If the decision is made to have parental input at the screening stage, it must be remembered that this stage applies to all students. Thus, any questionnaire or checklist should be sent or made available to all parents to complete. It may be more appropriate at this screening stage for a school to develop a general-interest survey that can be used for a variety of educational purposes, including screening for possible giftedness. In this way, parental expectations are not limited to their child's possible involvement in any one program.

Schools might prefer to gather parental data after the initial screening phase, when additional information is being sought on a pool of potential candidates for the program. Such detailed information could be gathered in an interview process with a questioner asking the same questions of each child's parent(s), or through a more comprehensive written survey instrument, or through a combination of both.

Parent surveys can be of two general types: a checklist of various exceptional behaviors or a more open-ended questionnaire. The first may be more appropriate for a general screening procedure. The general characteristics or behaviors listed for response can be similar or even identical to those on the teacher checklists, but care should be taken to avoid educational jargon and references to formal academic settings.

The more open-ended questionnaires can be used at either the screening stage or the assessment stage for potential candidates. These instruments ask parents to comment in their own words on such questions as:

- What are some of your child's most unusual interests and accomplishments?
- What do you see as your child's greatest need(s) at this time?
- How does your child feel about school? Has this changed since he or she began school?
- In what ways does your child relate to adults and older children?

One interesting phenomenon that has been observed about some parents of gifted children is their apparent lack of realization that their child is precocious. This is particularly true of parents who have only one child and limited contact with other children of their child's age to compare behaviors. Some parents are surprised to learn later that not all three-year-olds ask for arithmetic problems to solve or "older books" to read. Because of this, schools may wish to ask parents of primary students such questions as: When did your child begin to read and when did he/she begin to add numbers?

PEER REFERRALS

Students often have an excellent basis for judging the outstanding capabilities of their peers. Gathering such information may be accomplished informally by listening to and recording students' comments about their classmates. In a more formal screening method, students may be asked to complete a questionnaire that asks them to list one or two classmates who have various characteristics, such as:

- Reads the most difficult books,
- Is interested in the most unusual topics,
- Has the best sense of humor,
- Comes up with the most original ideas,
- Is the best problem-solver,
- Would be the best to ask for help with a difficult math problem,
- Writes the best stories.

Obviously, with younger students, the questions have to be more concrete. It would seem likely that only secondary students could deal with such abstractions as:

- Who pursues ideas most in depth?
- Who is the most sophisticated in the understanding of concepts?
- Who is the most critical, logical thinker?

Peer referrals of any kind are least reliable at the primary level (K-2+), since younger children may rely on adult/teacher cues for judgments about their peers. The fact that such young children have not developed a sense of self apart from a given environ-ment (e.g., the classroom) makes this method further complicated and problematic.

Whenever peer referrals are sought, schools might consider these recommendations:

- Careful instructions must be given before completing any such questionnaire.
- The seriousness of the task must be established in all settings, so that the results can be used to compare students from various classrooms (e.g., all sixth-grade students from four different classrooms).
- Classes of sufficient size are probably necessary to factor out responses that are misleading; a few students, despite the best atmosphere, might not take the task seriously and others might misunderstand it.
- A list of student names in the class/grade level is provided to each student so that he/she is familiar with all the students being screened.
- Information from peers is most accurate when it is based on experiences in a learning environment in which all students are given opportunities, encouragement, and positive responses to perform at their highest levels of ability.
- Especially by the time of early adolescence, it is not unusual for gifted children to conceal their abilities in order to conform with peer interests and expectations. This leads, once again, to the suggestion that information from this measure also be used to include, but not necessarily to exclude, students from further consideration.

Finally, there is the question of how to use formal peer questionnaires after a program has completed its initial comprehensive screening. At the maintenance stage, schools will generally be screening only students new to the school or students newly referred for possible selection. With relatively few students at any given grade level to screen, it may be difficult to justify the use of a formal peer questionnaire. This is especially true since peers may not have had a chance to get to know the special strengths of students new to the school. At this stage, then, it is perhaps best to use informal peer referrals especially from students who have been selected previously.

REFERRALS BY OTHERS

Community members who observe exceptional abilities in students may also be good sources of information. Community activities in which students participate, such as youth groups, scouts, musical or dramatic organizations, even jobs, are contexts in which perceptive adults may observe particular aptitudes, interests, skills, leadership, or other potential in students.

While it may be difficult to use a formal survey for such community members in a screening process, schools may wish to publicize their willingness to receive nominations or referrals for possible giftedness. If a school decides to serve students for exceptional leadership skills, this source of referral can become especially important, since students often demonstrate these abilities in out-of-school activities.

Such publicity can also benefit programs by providing rich sources of mentors and tutors, as well as gaining broad public support of program objectives and activities.

SELF-REFERRAL

Self-referral is another way in which information not easily measured by tests and checklists may be obtained about potentially gifted students. Through this method, schools can obtain a variety of alternative cues related to students' high abilities. Even though this method may be particularly appropriate for the secondary level, with careful accommodations it can produce valuable information even from younger students.

Self-referral does not mean asking students if they think they are gifted or exceptional. Rather, it can be a way for students to indicate that they would be interested in participating in educational opportunities that are highly challenging and rigorous. These might include directed independent studies, mentorships with adults who share similar interests, the production of original research in various disciplines, or participation in advanced course work.

Perhaps the best way to organize self-referrals is through a series of questions that can be answered either with short written responses or in an interview process. These questions would attempt to get students to identify their particular interests, strengths, and needs, to indicate what they have achieved so far on their own in following up on these interests, and to predict where they would like to go further. This kind of information can be used to develop program options as the students have already provided direction for their overall programming goal.

PUPIL PRODUCTS AND PERFORMANCES

Evaluation of pupil products and performances can be an excellent screening device that often is overlooked, especially in the intellectual and academic areas. It is, of course, one of the best ways of screening for students with exceptional abilities in the arts, and more will be said about this in the next chapter. The approach, however, can be used in screening students in all areas of giftedness.

The student who on his own has produced a truly outstanding science-fair research project, or who consistently does exceptionally well in challenging regional or national mathematics competitions is demonstrating exceptional abilities. Such a student is showing directly a need for further academic challenge. Indirect methods may or may not support this piece of strong evidence. Indeed, the student may not consistently achieve well in the regular science or math curricula. But if competent adults knowledgeable in science and mathematics can attest that only an exceptionally able student could perform these tasks at this age, then a very pertinent piece of evidence is available for the selection team to assess.

Students' grades or ranks can provide additional information. For example, a student whose current grades are average, but whose grades in previous years were exceptional, may be indicating a need for special programming. The student may have concluded that achieving well is no longer important. There could, undoubtedly, be many other reasons to explain this phenomenon, which should be investigated, but a slump should not automatically indicate a child is not gifted.

As mentioned above under self-referrals, schools can devise ways of evaluating students on the basis of new products and performances. Open-ended problems or tasks that result in specific student products can provide a means of testing students' insights, research skills, ability to work independently, approach to problem-solving, and other critical characteristics. Such problems need to be truly open-ended in that there should be no one correct solution to them. They need to be broad and challenging enough for students to demonstrate both their analysis of the possibilities and their own synthesis of a solution.

It is important that the criteria used to judge excellence and originality be specific to each discipline, the criteria for a product in history being different from one in literary analysis or science. The materials, techniques, and kinds of information needed to produce in these various disciplines are also quite different.

Secondly, the resulting products should be evaluated by professionals who truly can recognize exceptionality in their field of expertise. Especially for younger students, however, it is also important for these professionals to be joined by educators who understand the developmental levels of students. A professional historian may not be expected to appreciate the capabilities of a typical seventh grader.

The idea of products or performances always raises the issue of environmental bias. Some students have had more access than others to experiences and training outside of school. A student's exceptional abilities result from some combination of hereditary and environmental factors, neither of which the student has much control over, especially in the early formative years. So part of a student's possible need of a more differentiated education could be the result of advantages he or she has had outside of school. On the other hand, too much can be made of this advantage; natural ability may be the much stronger influence in the long run.

At any rate, schools can moderate bias relative to environmental advantage if they create tasks that have strict guidelines about:

- o whether or not adults may assist in any way,
- o minimal amounts of money that can be spent for materials, and
- o required documentation of research sources used.

Actually, the idea that many students will be willing to invest large amounts of time and energy on such products probably is exaggerated. In the academic areas, the basis of an advantaged environment may not be as critical as in some of the artistic domains, where more direct skill-based lessons could have more impact. In all areas, however, schools can devise problems that assess students abilities equitably, and the evaluators can always take these factors into their considerations.

The purpose of subjective measures is to provide schools all possible avenues of information to find those students whose needs are not being fully addressed in the regular curricular offerings. The goal of gifted and talented programming is not identifying, but providing appropriate differentiated services to students of exceptional ability.

104.07 (Excerpt)

(Assessment measures for screening students for Artistic Ability:)

1. Pupil products, such as auditions, portfolios, works-in-progress, performance
2. Pupil interview
3. Teacher referral
4. Referrals by professional artist(s) based on analysis of pupil work
5. Self-referral
6. Referral by parents, peers, members of the community
7. Other appropriate measures that have received prior approval from the Commissioner

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ARTS

If one were asked to name people with exceptional talents, undoubtedly included in the response would be various artists, famous musicians, actors, writers, and painters. Maine's inclusion of the arts as a distinct category of giftedness, then, is an affirmation of what our society recognizes and, at times, values: namely, that the arts are important, legitimate means of expression within our culture. Schools, as a reflection of society, also affirm this by providing instruction in the arts.

Identification of students with exceptional abilities in the literary, visual, and performing arts, however, can provide special challenges for schools. While Maine requires sequential instruction in the fine arts for all students in elementary grades, as well as one credit in the fine arts for high school graduation, not all schools provide a continuous program of arts education in the various literary, visual, and performing arts. As Maine defines both gifted/talented students and special programming for them in comparison to the regular school program, a well-constructed program of arts basics, provided for all students, would be the best context in which artistic potential and ability could emerge. By assessing what all students are capable of achieving in artistic areas, schools could more readily identify those relatively few students whose exceptional abilities require specialized instruction beyond the regular school program.

In the literary arts, most schools already include creative writing components in their language arts curricula that can provide opportunities for exceptional abilities to be assessed. Students' visual and performing arts abilities, too, can be demonstrated in many curricular areas, but educators often feel inadequate about evaluating the possible exceptional qualities of these. Therefore, schools may have to seek information from extracurricular and self-initiated artistic activities of students and enlist the aid of professionals in assessing these.

Students' experiences outside of school, especially exposure to the arts, can have a significant effect on whether they demonstrate and develop their innate artistic abilities. A student who can play a musical instrument well after years of private instruction, however, may not necessarily need additional special programming. Differences between students' experiences do make comparisons of age-peer abilities more complicated than simply providing opportunities for judging demonstrated performances.

In their definitions of exceptional artistic ability, schools should reflect the fact that technical skills are but a part of overall artistic ability. Creativity, sensitivity, and original insights are also aspects of this gift, as well as problem-solving ability and a capacity for critical thinking. Therefore, the technical skill to reproduce faithfully a commercial cartoon character, or to play musical scales flawlessly, does not necessarily equal artistic exceptionality.

A number of standardized tests and scales exist for assessing abilities in the arts, particularly visual art and music. While schools may wish to research the validity and reliability of such measures prior to considering their use, subjective measures remain preferred.

In general, a sound identification process for the arts will recognize the following issues:

- the need for a foundation program in the arts for all students,
- the inclusion of extracurricular information where pertinent,

- o the awareness of different experiences and exposures to the arts among students,
- o the realization that artistic ability is broader than mere technical skills, and
- o the appropriate use of subjective measures in screening and selection procedures.

Curriculum-based assessment in the arts is emerging as another method by which student abilities may be determined. It involves an approach in which arts educators observe and document student artistic growth over an extended period of time. The use of "portfolios," which are not limited to the visual arts, are kept and studied to show the gradual unfolding of students' artistic work over this period of time. The resulting collected pieces reveal such artistic aspects as reflection, perception, problem-solving, and self-assessment in the art form. Technical production becomes just one aspect of this growth. The use of such a method requires artistic projects to be seriously engaged in over a period of weeks in which students work on a central idea with sufficient time for incubation and multiple revisions. This approach also requires art educators to develop the skills necessary to sustain multiple student projects over this extended period, as well as to become keenly aware of the individual developmental stages through which students go in the process. The appeal of curriculum, based assessment is that an emphasis is placed on providing actual curriculum and instruction to students, and not on isolated testing and measurement.

STUDENT PRODUCTS

Artistic ability is demonstrated mainly through actual artistic production. Thus, one main area to be considered in screening for exceptional artistic ability is student works or products.

For the literary and visual arts, such student products might include:

- o assignments completed in the regular curricula,
- o works completed in an extracurricular setting, such as an art or writing club or private tutoring,
- o self-initiated, independently completed projects, as well as
- o works-in-progress, whatever their state of completion or place of origin.

For the performing arts, student products might include:

- o auditions organized for the specific purpose of screening for possible exceptionality, or
- o actual performances, such as a school play, a solo in a concert, or participation in a local talent show.

In assessing any student products, the expectations and standards must be appropriate to the developmental and experiential levels of the students.

Arts educators are well suited to make these judgments. In addition, it can be very helpful to include professional artists for evaluating student work. Their perspective can lend an impartial, informed, and professional perspective to the decision-making about student artistic talent.

REFERRALS BY PROFESSIONALS

The inclusion of artists-in-residence to assist in the screening process for exceptionally talented students can be an effective way to organize a screening procedure. Such artists, working in a school over a period of time and observing students interacting with them and their media, can provide valuable assessment information for the selection team. Such an approach often removes much of the possible artificiality and stress of a onetime audition process.

Other professional artists-painters, writers, musicians, actors, may notice potential or recognize demonstrated ability in a student through private lessons outside of school, at a regional or state competition, or through public displays and publications of student works. Whatever the forum, a strategy that allows artists not permanently connected with the school to provide appropriate screening information would seem worthwhile and legitimate. Whenever possible, such artists' input should be sought and considered, since it may provide much needed information in areas where limited in-school information may be available.

TEACHER REFERRAL

Both regular classroom teachers and teachers in the arts can refer students for possible selection either through an informal nomination process or through the use of checklists in the various artistic areas. As in the academic areas, it is important that these teachers know how to recognize characteristics of artistically gifted students.

A number of checklists are available with various characteristics of artistic abilities, but it is important that schools adapt any such instruments to fit their particular situations. A checklist used in a school that offers a broad, sequenced regular art program will differ from that of a school with a much more limited art curriculum. The availability of various artistic opportunities in a given community can also affect the kind of checklist used. A few ideas of the possible kinds of artistic characteristics are listed below.

For the visual arts:

- Shows an unusually high interest and satisfaction in visual arts activities,
- Demonstrates originality in choices of content, technique, and composition,
- Combines and experiments with various media to express ideas and feelings,
- Produces original, elaborate drawings as doodles or spontaneous "explanations,"
- Seems to have a natural sense of shading, perspective, color, detail,
- Appreciates the artistic works of others.

For the musical arts:

- Is able to perceive fine differences in sound (pitch, duration, timbre, etc.),
- Can recognize and accurately reproduce rhythmic phrases
- Is keenly aware of the sensuous, emotional qualities of music,
- Enjoys improvising and creating original tunes,
- Shows interest, enjoyment, and excitement about musical activities.

For the dramatic arts:

- o Is eager to participate in skits, role-playing, and dramatic readings,
- o Has a natural sense of timing and movement,
- o Uses voice, gestures, and facial expressions to communicate emotions,
- o Is a good mimic; enjoys entertaining others.

Such characteristics can be rated by teachers using scales of degree (e.g., 1 through 5) or of frequency (e.g., seldom through almost always). It is important to remember that the goal of such screening devices is to find and serve those students who are exceptional in comparison with their age peers, and not to measure such abilities in comparison to fully developed adult models of exceptional talent.

OTHER REFERRALS

As in academics, strategies for self-referral and peer referral may yield important information, especially for older students. Students should be encouraged to refer themselves by submitting portfolios, requesting auditions, or alerting program personnel to performances in which they will be involved. An interview process, perhaps assisted by community artists, also can be developed to assess individual interests and accomplishments in artistic pursuits. The recommended approaches to peer referrals, mentioned in Chapter Four, apply to the arts as well.

In the arts, parents often have the first indications of talent, just as they have in more traditional academic abilities. Depending on the scope of the school's art programming, parents may have the only true view of children's artistic talents. Parent questionnaires, therefore, should include questions about their child's artistic strengths and interests. The revelation that a child taught himself to play the guitar at six years old is an important piece of information that school personnel may not even know. Once known, appropriate assessment of the degree of talent can be accomplished. Even if formal parent questionnaires are not used, parents should be made aware of how they might refer their child for screening and possible selection.

104.08 Selection

Annually, a team of at least three qualified professionals shall select children for placement in the gifted and talented program.

A. The team shall include, but not be limited to, the following staff:

1. An administrator
2. A teacher
3. Another individual, who may be a school employee or another person, who would aid the selection procedure, e.g., an artist for selection of students with artistic ability; a guidance counselor

CHAPTER FIVE: THE SELECTION PROCESS

Once screening has been completed on all students, the collected information is used to determine which students need additional educational services based on their assessed exceptional abilities. The selection process includes the steps that must be taken to reach these determinations properly.

In order to have an efficient and equitable process for gathering information to be used in the selection process, each school administrative unit should designate the individual(s) who will have the overall responsibility of conducting the identification process. These individuals are usually the program coordinators, who may or may not actually serve on the selection team. In any case, since the other members of the team usually have other full-time responsibilities and may not be as well informed about gifted education, it is the program personnel who actually carry out the various tasks related to collecting the necessary student information.

At the screening level, program personnel collect and clearly summarize the screening information for presentation to the selection team. Since the goal of screening is to review the entire student population, it follows that the criteria for choosing screening methods be:

- availability,
- cost-effectiveness,
- group orientation, and
- easy administration.

For some students, the screening information will show quite clearly a need for additional services. For others, it will be obvious that the regular curriculum is appropriate for their needs. For still others, however, the screening information will not be definitive, and further information will be needed before a decision can be reached. At this point, methods that may require more time, individualization, and perhaps additional expense may be necessary. However, they will be needed only for a relatively small portion of the students. If the selection team has clearly established the general guidelines for determining when additional information is needed, the coordinator may immediately go ahead with collecting it. Otherwise, the team may have to meet to review the screening summary and to determine what additional information is needed for certain candidates.

THE SELECTION TEAM

The selection team has the most critical role to play in the identification process, so its members should be chosen carefully. They should possess:

- a thorough understanding of the identification process,
- a sensitive appreciation of the nature and needs of gifted students,
- a knowledge of the possible programming options available to selected students, and
- a willingness to devote themselves and their time to this task.

104.08 (continued)

B. The responsibilities of this selection team are as follows:

1. Review the information collected on children who have met the screening criteria.
2. Collect additional information when appropriate.
3. Select children for placement in the gifted and talented program based on an in-depth assessment of collected information.
4. Oversee the annual review of the selection process.
5. Assure that the selection process is equitable.

104.09 Placement

Selected children shall be appropriately placed in a gifted and talented program. The superintendent, under policies adopted by the school board, shall establish procedures to accomplish the following:

1. Assure collaboration between the regular classroom teacher and gifted and talented program staff to develop the program that will be provided for selected children.
2. Notify the superintendent of the children selected for the program.
3. Provide the superintendent a description of the program(s) that will be provided.
4. Notify parents of the eligibility of their child for participation in the program, provide them with a description of the program and obtain written parental permission to place the child in the program.
5. Maintain records on each child's participation in the gifted and talented program.
6. Conduct an annual review of each child's program to evaluate appropriateness of placement and instruction.

The team consists of at least three members at all times. While some team members may remain constant, others may change, depending on the category of giftedness, the grade level being considered, or various teaching assignments. By keeping some members constant, consistent application of the identification procedure may be assured and a comprehensive view of the entire process maintained. By varying other team members, specialized expertise in various areas may be gained. For efficiency, it is probably best to limit teams to five or six members.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Through the review of the collected screening data, the team decides which students need special services and which do not. For those students about whom a clear decision cannot be reached based on the screening information, the team will need to request more in-depth assessment using additional data. In some cases, they may request that the program personnel gather specific information, such as an individual intelligence test, a more detailed teacher assessment of certain students' needs and abilities, a survey of the students' past teachers, a more detailed parent questionnaire, or, for older students, a student interview.

By making selection decisions on a case-by-case basis, the team can also make thoughtful educational recommendations about those students for whom a special program may not be necessary at that time.

The team has responsibilities that go beyond the mere acceptance of a group of students already selected through a system of cutoff scores on various measurements. The variety and complexity of possible sources of information on students requires that a group of professionals carefully weigh all the evidence, in order to make selection decisions, and even perhaps to suggest programming options.

The team further should conduct an annual review of the selection process to ensure that it is equitable. This may require that the team members become aware of questions and concerns raised about the process in the school and community.

While the team must meet annually to select students for placement in programming, some schools have discovered that it becomes necessary to have the team meet more frequently in order to act on students newly referred. If a teacher, for example, makes a strong recommendation that a student is showing signs of exceptional ability in October, that student should be considered as soon as possible rather than having to wait until June when a team might normally convene to select students for the following school year. Because of such instances, the team may need to convene on a more regular basis.

PLACEMENT

Appropriate placement of selected students in gifted and talented programs is the goal of the entire identification process. It is the need of gifted students for special educational modifications to their regular school program that is the reason for all the screening, assessment, and selection procedures. The placement process has several aspects which are discussed below.

Collaboration

The success of a gifted and talented program depends to a large extent on collaboration with the regular classroom teacher. It is important that classroom teachers be consulted and assisted in planning and providing appropriate options for identified students in their classes, even if services are to take place outside that classroom. Collaboration of this nature affirms the notion that identified students have special educational needs all the time, not just a few hours a week. And collaboration can ensure that all aspects of a student's education are carried out in the most appropriate and beneficial ways.

Classroom teachers should be provided the reasons underlying the identification of individual students. Both regular and special educators of the gifted need to inform each other about identified students' activities and progress in their total educational program. Successes as well as difficulties or problems that identified students are having should be shared regularly. Program personnel should work with classroom teachers to identify effective strategies that are already in place within the classroom and to develop additional ways in which the regular curriculum might be modified to meet gifted students' needs. Issues surrounding scheduling, grouping, curriculum development, instructional settings, and peer relationships are among those that can productively be addressed through a collaborative process. Such a mutually active relationship among teachers will result in an integrated and responsive total program that provides the best services for identified students.

Program Description

The goal of the program description is to articulate the ways in which the school plans to meet the various needs of its gifted students. The programming for gifted students may encompass a variety of provisions in each category of giftedness, and vary from elementary to secondary level as well as from one content area to another. The program description should reflect, in summary form, the goals, objectives, and general activities that will be carried out. If a program provision is unique to a particular student, additional information reflecting this circumstance can be provided. It is not possible, of course, for all activities to be foreseen at the beginning of any special programming; the flexibility to modify options should be kept. Therefore the program description need only provide the broad, general outlines of the special programming.

Parent Notification

Ideally, all parents should have a general awareness that the gifted and talented program is one component of the school's overall program of educational services for children. Additionally, parents or guardians of those children selected for placement in the gifted program should have a clear understanding of the ways in which their child's current needs indicate that such program placement is appropriate. A discussion with parents may also be useful either before or after formal notification.

104.10 Review of Identification

The superintendent, under policies adopted by the school board, shall establish a procedure to review the identification of children for the gifted and talented program. Requests for such review may be made to the superintendent for these purposes:

1. To reconsider the eligibility of a child to be selected for inclusion in the gifted and talented program
2. To review the appropriate placement of a child within the program
3. For removal of a child from the program

It is recommended that parents of children not placed in the program also be notified, if additional testing or evaluation was called for in the in-depth assessment of their child. It is further recommended that the ways in which this additional assessment revealed that placement was not appropriate at the time be explained. Lack of communication can often result in lack of support.

The content and tone of the formal parent notification is critically important. The communication should clearly indicate that placement in the program is a response to perceived student needs and that participation in this program is a part of the student's total educational program.

Student Records

Records regarding students who are placed in the program should be maintained by appropriate program personnel. Such records may include selection data, parent permission forms, program activity records, evaluation data on progress, and the like. Where and how they are kept is governed by local policies.

Annual Student Program Review

The placement of identified students should be reviewed every year to determine whether their placement and programming are appropriate. If students' needs appear to be well met by the programming provisions, the placement may continue for the following year. Unless a given student's program will undergo major changes, it may not be necessary to require new parent permission each year or to provide new program descriptions. But, as with all good education, it is important that parents be kept informed of their children's progress in all aspects of their educational program.

REVIEW OF IDENTIFICATION

Educational decisions about student needs and programs are never simple matters. Despite careful planning and implementation of identification procedures, situations may arise in which the decision regarding a student's placement, or nonplacement, in the program must be reviewed and possibly changed. A clearly outlined review process should be in place for this purpose. The goal of a review process is to provide avenues for further discussion to gain additional insights and information about a student and his or her educational needs.

An effective review process, besides being known and available, would be guided by the following principles:

- The process should be flexible enough to address a variety of situations.
- The process should be clearly articulated for each review area: inclusion, change of placement, and exit.
- The process may be different for addressing the specific category in which the student's needs are to be reassessed; it may also want to address affective as well as cognitive issues in some instances.
- The process should be consistently and efficiently applied.
- A summary of the review proceedings should be maintained for the student's records.

The procedure through which a teacher, a parent, or some other involved professional may initiate a review should be clearly stated in local policy. This should include information on the appropriate person to contact and how to make a request specifying the reasons for which the review is sought. These might include: the acquisition of new identification information, changes in the regular school program, or changes in the student's performance.

The particular actions that are taken upon a request for review should be determined by an established procedure set by local policy. Such a procedure might involve the original selection team or some other approach. Whoever is responsible for the review, the process would likely involve:

- review of the information previously collected during the screening and selection procedures and the decision made,
- review of the reasons underlying the request,
- a decision on whether additional information is needed, and
- a decision regarding the review request.

AFTERWORD

The entire process of identifying gifted and talented students is an important and sophisticated task. Certain principles, if kept clear from the start, will help to make the process effective.

The goal of the process is to find and serve that relatively small number of exceptional students whose educational needs might not be fully met by the regular school programs. This goal should not be confused with other educational goals, such as providing broad-based enrichment opportunities or adding other valuable improvements to the regular curriculum. The aim, therefore, should be to identify students' exceptional needs, which are then addressed through appropriate programming options, and not to fill up slots in a program.

With a clear emphasis on individual needs, schools can avoid the trap of considering selection as a prize for hard work, good citizenship, or even top grades. This focus should also limit the practice of placing students in the program on a "tryout" basis. As in other forms of special education, appropriate programming for the gifted is a response to previously assessed group or individual needs.

The identification process needs to have someone responsible for carrying out its various tasks. A school board can set policy, an advisory committee can establish priorities and directions, but the actual tasks of screening and assessment as with any other worthwhile educational project take individual time and energy to accomplish. In larger school units, the actual identification tasks might be shared by various individuals at different grade levels and buildings. The coordination of these efforts would be provided by the person designated to have administrative responsibility for the entire program.

Identification can and is being done equitably and well in schools today. There is always the need to be aware of ways to improve the process, especially in regard to the underserved, at, risk gifted and talented. The tendency to hesitate to act until a process can be perfect, however, seems to be peculiar to those facing identification of the gifted. This tendency should be examined honestly to make sure that it is not resulting from a misconception of identification as a reward mechanism.

In addition to finding a group of students with advanced, complex abilities, identification can accomplish other things. It can inform schools and teachers of the true potential of identified students and help them think about more appropriate ways to meet their needs. For older students especially, identification can be the spark that makes them see more clearly what they could really achieve with their abilities. For parents, identification can provide an explanation for their child's different behaviors, attitudes, and needs; and with guidance, they can find positive ways to encourage their child to reach for his or her potential.

Selection, however, is not an end in itself. To diagnose a need and then not provide for it is not in the best interests of a student. In fact, it can lead to frustration of everyone involved. Selection provides directions and keys; what is inside the correct doors are the appropriate, differentiated educational responses to the identified needs. It is for this reason that true identification is more than selection. It must include appropriate placement to be real, worthwhile, and defensible.

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